

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 04253 220206Z

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

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R 220120Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 655

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, MY

SUBJ: SABAH POLITICAL CRISIS: WEEK-END DEVELOPMENTS

REF: KL 4230

1. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, MUSTAPHA RETURNED TO SABAH JUL 18 AS SCHEDULED AND ADDRESSED RALLY OF 5,000 UNITED SABAH NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (USNO) SUPPORTERS IN KOTA KINABALU. SABAH CHINESE ASSOCIATION (SCA), USNO'S PARTNER IN SABAH GOVT, DECLARED LOYALTY TO MUSTAPHA DENIED IT WILL BOLT TO NEW PARTY BERJAYA (PARA 2 REFTEL). ALSO, DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER DZULKIFLI HAMID SAID PUBLICLY HE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT USNO, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT PLEDGE LOYALTY TO MUSTAPHA PERSONALLY.

2. MAJOR ASPECT OF PUBLIC AND PRESS DEBATE HAS REVOLVED AROUND
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USNO'S MEMBERSHIP IN NATIONAL FRONT (NF). BERJAYA

AND NF OFFICIALS, INCLUDING NF SECRETARY-GENERAL ABDUL GHAFAR BABA (FEDERAL MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT) HAVE CLAIMED USNO IS NOT NOW AN NF MEMBER BECAUSE MUSTAPHA REFUSED TO ACCEPT CERTAIN CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES ADOPTED BY FRONT IN LATE 1974 (SEE KL A-155, 11/14/74). MUSTAPHA REPORTEDLY OBJECTED TO USING NF SYMBOL, SCALES OF JUSTICE, IN SABAH AND TO METHOD OF APPOINTMENT OF STATE NF CHAIRMEN. CONSEQUENTLY, NF MEMBERSHIP OF SABAH ALLIANCE (USNO, SCA AND MINISCULE SABAH INDIAN CONGRESS) TECHNICALLY LAIFFD. ON JUL 20, GHAFAR BABA SAID BOTH BERJAYA AND USNO APPLICATIONS FOR NF MEMBERSHIP HAVE BEEN RECEIVED, BUT SUNDAY EDITION OF JALAY-LANGUAGE DAILY "BERITA HARIAN" (PART OF GOVT-INFLUENCED " NEW STRAITS TIMES" PUBLISHING GROUP) SAID NF WILL BE IN "NO HURRN" TO TAKE ACTION ON THESE APPLICATIONS. MEANWHILE, USNO LEADERS IN SABAH INSIST THAT USNO IS FULL NF MEMBER AND THAT MUSTAPHAS HAS ACCEPTED NF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES.

3. FOR ITS PART, BERJAYA CONTINUES TO CALL FOR EARLY STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, BUT NO CONCRETE STEPS IN THIS REGARD HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY SABAH GOVT. BERJAYA HAS HELD SEVERAL RALLIES AROUND THE STATE AND IS BUSILY FORMING PARTY BRANCHES. SITUATION IN SABAH REPORTEDLY IS CALM, AND POLICE INSPECTOR-GENERAL HANIFF OMAR JUL 20 SAID PEOPLE IN SABAH "HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR" FROM POLICE. HE ALSO SAID APPOINTMENT OF NEW POLICE COMMANDER IN SABAH WAS ROUTINE AND NOT RELATED TO POLITICAL CRISIS THERE (PARA 4, KL 4170).

4. COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER RAZAK CONCEIVABLY COULD HAVE PREVENTED DEADLOCK BETWEEN BERJAYA AND USNO BY ACCEPTING BERJAYA INTO NATIONAL FRONT WHEN NEW PARTY WAS FIRST ANNOUNCED. FEDERAL POLITICIANS NOW APPEAR TO BE UNDECIDED WHETHER TO REMOVE MUSTAPHA ENTIRELY OR TO LET CONTENDERS BATTLE IT OUT. AS NOTED PARA 3 REFTEL, HOWEVER, A WAITING GAME WOULD SEEM TO WORK IN MUSTAPHA'S FAVOR.
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